# MEMORIAL
OF
# NOAH PORTER D. D.

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1867

PROPERTY OF
PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

BX 7260 .P62 W66 1867
Woolsey, Theodore Dwight,
1801-1889.
Memorial of Noah Porter, D.
D.

Rev. Charles Hodge D.D.
with the respects of
The Publishers

# MEMORIAL

OF

# NOAH PORTER, D. D.

LATE OF

## FARMINGTON, CONN.

COMPRISING THE DISCOURSES OF

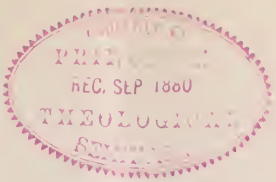
PRES. T. D. WOOLSEY, REV. LEVI L. PAINE,

AND

HORACE BUSHNELL, D. D.,

OCCASIONED BY HIS DEATH.

FARMINGTON:
PUBLISHED BY SAMUEL S. COWLES.
1867.




# FUNERAL ADDRESS,

BY

THEODORE D. WOOLSEY, D. D.

President of Yale College.

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# ADDRESS.

I APPEAR before you to-day, my friends and fellow-Christians, with the feeling that it is a high privilege and honor to stand in this pulpit and give my testimony to the worth of the venerable man who is now no more. I feel also that it is a duty I owe to the memory of one with whom I was most pleasantly associated during the sixteen years when we were together members of the Corporation of Yale College. Still more, a long intimacy with his son, who is traveling across the water to recover health and strength after exhaustive labors, persuades me that there is a certain propriety in my paying a public tribute of respect to a father whom he so much reveres. And yet may I not say that I come here with embarrassment, partly because I fail in that minute and circumstantial knowledge which is so important on occasions like these, and partly because you all know the venerable man at whose funeral we are gathered, so well, that you need no description of his life and character, and because you honor him with such unqualified honor, that he needs no eulogy. There is something very peculiar in this case. Here

is a man who has lived eighty years among you. Your fathers, your grandfathers, knew him. He has acquired a traditionary character. He is known by you as well as the rocks you look at from your windows, or the stream that enriches your meadows. Is there any doubt in your minds what Dr. Porter was, or any misgivings as to his main principles of life, or has the view taken of him a generation ago changed in any respect, except in becoming more and more confirmed? And was there not in the man himself a stability, an even growth, a placid flow of character, so that the companions of the young man, and the parishioners of his middle life, and the friends of his declining years, if they could all be assembled together, would utter one common voice in regard to him? Nay, more, would not the old men of his youthful pastorate, and the young men of his old age speak one and the same language?—expressing thus the estimate of him, entertained by five or even six generations of such as have seen him in daily life. Now when his character is seen thus to rest on an immovable rock, and when his repute has not veered for sixty years, there is an unbroken testimony for him a thousand times stronger than anything that a man may say. Why then say anything? Why not commit him to the grave amid the unexpressed memories of multitudes who are certain, every one of them, that every other pays him an unquestioning tribute of reverence? Why should not sacred silence reign here rather than the words of a mortal, and joy that a life so bright has set so blessedly, and

love for the man who generations long has shed his placid influences on this favored spot? Such is my feeling, such must be yours. And the feeling would be justified, were it not that in expressing our feelings we honor the man, we seek to honor the Master who placed him in the ministry, we disclose our thankfulness to God for such a life so long continued, we utter with a common voice our testimony to the value of that holy Gospel that can make men means of so much good, and can so round off the character.

The lives of some men are subjected to a great variety of formative influences, so that many sides of the character are cultivated at once, or it may be that sinister impulses from one quarter are simply repelled and neutralized by opposing causes. Dr. Porter's life neither had nor needed such diversified influences. His simplicity of nature was unfolded under the sway of simple circumstances; he was like a plant which transplantation will not improve, which can thrive best under the genial and wonted influences of its native soil. Born in 1781, in this tranquil spot, the descendant of ancestors who had here lived religious lives since 1652, when one of them was among the first settlers of the town, and the first founders of this church, the son of a father who "was many years one of its deacons," baptized here in his infancy, he looked forward to no other life than that of a farmer, to which his ancestors had been devoted. His father placed him in his early youth in the family of the Rev. Mr. Washburn, then the minister of the parish, to pass a winter with him

for the completion of his education. Then it was, if I am not deceived, that he had those quiet but effectual religious impressions which led him to seek admission into the church. His pastor, seeing in him the power and the spirit to serve God in the ministry, persuaded him to consecrate himself to the sacred calling. His father was averse to this change in his plan of life, as involving almost of course a separation from the place of his nativity and his home. "It was," to adopt his own words, "in a conflict of feelings between a desire for the ministry and a sense of obligation to his parents in their declining age, that he was induced" to abandon plans which had been formed for him, and to the fulfillment of which he had looked forward. This, perhaps, was the crisis of his life, involving, it may be, more struggle than would be gathered from his own calm words. But the problem of Providence was soon worked out in a way that none of the parties dreamed of. The son, obeying the command of God like Abraham, was not called to a long separation from those who were unwilling that he should leave them. The minister who had led him to his new profession was disabled and died just as he was ready to preach the gospel, and as Mr. Washburn died, he was called to be his successor. The father recovered him, enlarged in gifts, to be a spiritual friend and comforter.

The years between his determination to enter the ministry and his call to the pulpit in his native town, passed quickly by in the work of preparatory discipline. How faithfully he studied when in college, and

what confidence he inspired in himself, may be gathered from the fact that he delivered the valedictory oration of his class at the public commencement of 1803, and that in 1806 he was selected as the first from his class for the office of tutor. This office he declined, and it was only a few weeks afterward that he was called by Providence to become the pastor of this church.

That he should be called, so soon after being licensed as a preacher of the gospel, to the church in his native town, is surely no slight proof of the confidence reposed in his talents, his gifts as a sermonizer, and his piety. But that he should continue to enjoy the respect and love of those who had known him as a boy, that he should for once belie the old proverb that a prophet is without honor in his own country, that he should be able to retain this respect and love through an unbroken ministry of fifty-five years, until he was supplied with a colleague, that he should until nearly the age of eighty-five, like some grand old tree, of which no one now remembers the beginnings, be the object of the regards of all passers by,—*this* indeed, in our time of removals and short ministerial lives, is something remarkable. At his death, he was the oldest minister in Connecticut, the father of the clergy. In his half-century discourse he thus expresses himself, after speaking of the goodness of God in giving him a field of labor so much to his mind: "I have [also] reason to admire his goodness in having continued me in it so long, and enabled me to prosecute my work in it with so little interruption. Fifty years, with the intermission of

only a few weeks, some by sickness and some by necessary absence, I have gone out and come in among you. Few men live so long; fewer preach so long; and very few do this statedly so long in the same charge. [None, he might have added, in the place where they were born and brought up.] I believe there is not at present another pastor in Connecticut who was ordained before me and has the sole charge of the church in which he was first installed." And this in his humility he ascribes to the fact that "the people have been more stable, and that leading men here have been deeply impressed with the importance of a stable ministry, and have been disposed to bear and forbear that they might secure it." Very possibly, but has not the minister himself much to do with the stability of the people, or could a man of a character just the reverse of his have kept so long the confidence which he had at first attracted.

And what was the success of Dr. Porter's ministry? It was such that he might well, as he looked back upon his career from the last years of his life, give thanks to the chief Shepherd that he had taken him into his service, and given him the care of souls. It was such that this Christian church may well give thanks to the chief Shepherd that he assigned to his servant this field of labor, and brought him into connection with this flock. It is true that since Dr. Porter began his ministry two churches, those of Unionville and Plainville, having been formed out of the mother church in the village of Farmington, the number of attendants

at public worship has been reduced one-half, so that in later times a much less number of souls has been under his charge. It is true, also, that for the first fifteen years of his pastorate, from 1806 to 1821, the church hardly held its own, the number of admissions not being quite equal to the number of removals and of deaths. It is true, again, that many who were for a time under his influence, emigrated to other parts of the country, and no longer felt the power of his life and preaching. But the blessing that has accompanied his labors has been great and permanent: if the church is not so strong as it was when the population of a much larger district met in this place, it has yet sent out its colonies to strengthen the kingdom of Christ; it has sent out its sons to diffuse the gospel here taught through all parts of this land. The first marked success of Dr. Porter's preaching was in 1821, a year of blessings from God to many churches, when not less than two hundred and fifty converts were the fruit of the labors of the pastor and of Mr Nettleton, and two hundred and thirty-four made a profession of religion in this house. Of these, to use Dr. Porter's own words, "a large proportion were heads of families, and of the most wealthy, intelligent and influential in the congregation. The moral aspect of society, and more especially in this village, was wonderfully changed. Prayer and praise were heard in almost every house, quarrels were settled, animosities were healed, Christian unity and fellowship were the bond of social life, and zeal for the spread of the gospel and the conversion of

men to God called forth the activities of hundreds who had been alive only to their private, worldly interests."

This was the most marked blessing on Dr. Porter's work as a minister. But from this time onward, until he closed his ministry, the showers of grace were frequent. In 1826, the youth in the Academy came under the sway of divine truth, and twenty-five made a profession of religion not long afterward. In 1828, a revival penetrated into one part of the town, and thirty-seven were received into the church as its fruits. The revival of 1831, brought forty into the church; in 1834, fifty were received; in 1838, ninety-four; in 1840, twenty-five; in 1843, ninety-seven; in 1851, fifty-five. In all, up to that last year, eight hundred and sixty-six were gathered into the fold of Christ, a great host for one man to be the instrument in leading to God and to salvation. Many of these are still here to testify to the reality of God's work, and the fidelity of the pastor; not a few who are gone forth to a distance from their early home, remember this as the birthplace of their souls, and our venerated friend as their spiritual father; but the majority are gone before him, and who can tell the joy of those recognitions, of that interchange of love, of that Christian fellowship between the glorified Christian and the instrument of his salvation, that must cheer and brighten the heavenly world.

The doctrines which Dr. Porter taught, and by which he won souls for Christ, were the same old doctrines which were preached in this church since it was built,

and in New England since it was settled, the doctrines in substance of Edwards, as interpreted by Dr. Dwight, whom Dr. Porter, as his instructor and friend, held in the highest honor. They were in short the doctrines of a mild Calvinism, as modified by the New England divines of the former days, when theology was studied as the highest of the sciences, with the utmost earnestness and concentration of thought. Yet, as there are two schools, even in New England, it is proper to say that he agreed through the middle and decline of his life, on the whole, with his friend, Dr. Taylor, in his philosophy of Christian truth. In fact, his own opinions changed in some slight degree as he grew in years, just as those of Dr. Taylor were, in some minor points, deviations from the scheme of Dr. Dwight. Of this change Dr. Porter in his half-century discourse gives us so instructive an account that I cannot forbear to quote a somewhat long passage relating to this subject.

"There are points of doctrine," says he, "which have been variously expounded in this church, as in other churches of New England, in the progress of two centuries. At the opening of our records is a catechism, which seems to have been adopted by the church at its formation, as a confession of faith. According to it, 'Adam's transgression is imputed to his posterity,' by which 'they are liable to eternal misery.' 'The sin of mankind is of two kinds, original and actual.' 'Original sin is the swerving of their whole nature from the law of God.' 'Actual sin is the swerving of all their actions from his law.' 'Justification is the imputation

of Christ's righteousness to the believer.' 'The righteousness of Christ is two-fold, his active and his passive obedience!' 'His active obedience is that wherein he fulfilled all righteousness—his performing all the duties required in the law.' 'His passive obedience is that wherein he fulfilled all the sufferings that the breach of the law required.' 'Man by nature cannot believe of himself.' These forms of doctrine have their foundation in truth; yet there are few of us, if any, who could give our assent to them without explanation and qualification. As forms, they have gradually and without controversy, been dropped, both in the standing confessions of the church and the teachings of the pulpit. Silently, under better light, they have given place to others more correspondent with the simplicity of the Gospel, and more commending themselves to the conscience. Shades of them have indeed reached our own times; were received by myself, as I had been taught, and were adopted and preached in some of my earlier discourses, together with certain theories of regeneration, and certain explanations of the reasons of the counsels of God in the permission of sin, and of his sovereignty in election and reprobation, for which, on careful examination since, I have found no warrant in the Scriptures, and the preaching of which, I greatly fear, was a stumbling block to certain hearers, whose prejudices against the truth I deplored. As it has been I suppose it will be. While I am sure that the scheme of doctrine which I have preached, is for substance the same as has been preached here from the beginning,

and is the true Gospel of the grace of God, I cannot presume that those who will come after me will not find in it mistakes, if not as great as we see in the preaching of the former times, yet such as mar the purity and obstruct the power of 'the truth as it is in Jesus;' for as Baxter quaintly but forcibly says: 'the word of God is divine, but our mode of dispensing it is human, and there is scarcely anything we have the handling of, but we leave on it the prints of our fingers.' But while I say this, it is due to myself and to the truth of God to say, that in the burden of my preaching, I have not come to you doubtfully, with opinions and arguments of my own, but I have come to you 'declaring the testimony of God,'—referring you to his word for my authority, and to your own sense of its import as my witness,—that your faith might not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God, assured that whatever imperfection there may be in our reasonings, there can be none in his word."

What noble words are these! how full of manliness, modesty and freedom; how ready he is to confess to slight changes of religious philosophy in the course of a long life; how tolerant of the opposing sentiments of others; how sensible that there may be errors remaining in his own system, which wiser generations will discard, yet how sure that he has built on the foundation other than which no man can lay; how inclined to test a theology by the practical effects of its doctrines on the consciences of men, and yet how submissive in the end to the authority of Scripture, which is all perfect as the

sun, too perfect for our limited faculties to grasp and to unfold without stripping it of part of its glory.

The method of sermonizing which Dr. Porter adopted in the first years of his ministry, was, so far as I am able to ascertain, that which prevailed in New England when he began to preach. His discourses were at that time theological and formal, such as his people would naturally expect to hear and he would naturally at that time regard as most calculated to do good to the souls of men. In connection with the gradual change in his way of presenting and vindicating the gospel, he had recourse to a freer method which allowed of more illustration and a wider range of topics, and was less technical in the exhibition of doctrinal truth. In the later portion of his ministerial life, during the last twenty-five years, by reading Neander's life of Christ, and other similar works, he acquired a new interest in biblical study, and in the results of historical interpretation. This refreshed his mind and furnished new matter for his sermons, which after this were richer, more instructive, more complete in every respect. Throughout his ministry his style was simple and chaste. With the capacity of becoming a finished preacher after the best rhetorical model, he deliberately chose that manner of writing and of exhibiting truth, which in his judgment seemed most fitted to do good to his hearers. I remember long ago to have heard that in the first years of his ministry he found himself inclined to reach after beauty and finish of style, but carefully restrained himself in favor of great simplicity and directness. Prac-

tical usefulness was his constant aim, as was manifest in the adaptation of his discourses to the state of his parish, in his bold and faithful rebukes of prevailing sins, in the suitableness of his personal applications of truth. He was earnest and often rose into a fine unstudied eloquence.

Dr. Porter in an eminent sense made his pastoral and pulpit labors his life work. Being engrossed by this, he found small leisure for reading; he seldom wrote for the press; he was very rarely absent from home, even on public religious occasions; he found attention to his land to be so much of a burden that he was compelled to throw it off from his shoulders, and he never gave himself to mere relaxation. He always appeared in the pulpit with a written discourse; always, I say, until the last year of his life, when once or twice he ventured on extemporaneous addresses. And yet his unwritten remarks, on other occasions, were full of variety, richness of thought, and tender Christian feeling.

As a pastor, Dr. Porter was laborious, systematic, wholly devoted to his work, a father to his people of every condition down to the lowest. In the early years of his ministry, before the churches in Unionville and Plainville took off a part of his parishioners from the mother church, his pastoral charge was particularly heavy, the rides through his parish were long, and the population of whom he had the spiritual oversight was large. But he shrunk not from the work, nor neglected

it. In middle life he met his people in the lecture-room on Sunday evening, after the two discourses in the church; Monday evening was devoted to the holding of a meeting in one of the outer districts of the town, and on Wednesday evening there was another meeting at the centre of the parish. He visited all the schools and catechised the children. He took an interest in the Academy, and in all the young persons who were gathered in Farmington for their education. He was most faithful in visiting the sick; knew everybody, and befriended the poor and the destitute. In January last he called upon all the people of the village, rich and poor. During the summer he made stated visits to a cluster of very poor and ignorant people in one part of the town in order to instruct them in the things of the Gospel. Probably few ministers of his time, as pastors and preachers, have been more successful, more faithful, or more laborious.

Success like his, and a hold such as he had on his people for so long a life, seems to suppose not only intellectual, but moral and spiritual qualities of a high order.

He was a man of decided ability, of a mind well developed in all its powers, of good reasoning and intuitive faculties, of an excellent taste and a sound judgment, with a thirst for knowledge which did not permit him to stagnate even in old age. But his qualities of character were more rare and beautiful. He had great modesty and humility in his estimate of himself, which kept him as remote from self-consciousness

and vanity as possible. He had an artless, simple, unpretending character, with no trickery or finesse about it. He was a man of uncommon mildness and meekness of temper, disposed to yield to others rather than to force his claims upon them, not easily irritated by opposition, nor losing his self-control, willing to compromise rather than to enter into a conflict. He was not indeed the man to head an aggressive movement; he was more like the Apostle John than like Paul, more like Melancthon than like Luther, and if, when duty imperatively demanded it, he could overcome the mildness of his nature, yet it was not without a force put upon himself. He appeared to have no love of power, nor strong desire of personal distinction, nor jealousy, nor pride. If any of these qualities were in him by nature, grace had rooted them out.

And what a genial character did that grace make him—how loving, how hopeful, how forbearing, how mild in rebuke, how earnest for the welfare of Christ's cause, how pure and holy. You who heard him and knew what he was in private, who heard him in all moods and frames of mind, and saw him in a great variety of situations, *you* can best testify what a calm, even, placid life of godliness was his. You young people, removed from him by age and the changes of society, can testify how he inspired mingled love and reverence in a high degree; you will say, I am confident, that few old persons you have seen have been more lovely than he, that few old Christians have shone with so soft and mild a light.

His excellence caused him to be widely known and honored beyond the bounds of his parish, as, for instance, in the neighboring churches, in the councils of religious societies, and in the corporation of Yale College. Of this last body he was a member for thirty-nine years, and of its most important committee for a portion of that period. Here I saw him frequently, and the same meek, gentle character which he manifested elsewhere was conspicuous here also. I never saw him discomposed or irritated in debate, never disturbed by opposition, never other than the gentlest and kindest of men.

And with such a temper so sanctified by the power of grace, amid scenes so congenial, with so much more than ordinary success attending his labors, he lived a quiet, happy life. Providence, too, had exempted him from the domestic afflictions to which almost every life so protracted is exposed,—he did not outlive his family. Every child he ever had is still living, and he has had comfort in them all. But old age was stealing on him. It was harder for him to hear than formerly, and at length even eye-sight began to fail. It was time to withdraw from one and another of the relations of the outward world. In his beautiful half-century sermon of 1856, he contemplates throwing part of his work upon a colleague. In 1862, he insisted, against the wishes of his associates, on leaving the Corporation of Yale College, on account of his deafness, and already the year before, was a colleague found acceptable to him and to the people. How gracefully he retired

from a part, and at length from nearly all his ministerial labor; with what a fatherly spirit he met his young associate; how little he wanted to keep the authority of a minister after the active functions were resigned, it was beautiful to behold. In his old age life and sympathy were still fresh. He read new books, he felt an active interest as well in private as in public events, he entered earnestly into the great struggle of our country, and rejoiced in the issue. He was hopeful, cheerful, happy in life, with no anxieties as he looked forward. And so he died peacefully away, not permitted, indeed, by his disease to know that death was nigh, or to express his hope, but in calmness of spirit, and with little bodily pain.

> "So gently shuts the eye of day;
> So dies a wave along the shore."

And now is not the natural lesson taught by such a life that which is suggested by one of the last verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day and forever." The reference here is to rulers in the church, or elders, who had been removed by death from their earthly labors, and whose lives were fresh in the recollection of their flock. Jesus Christ, the unchangeable author of an unalterable faith, was the life-giving fountain from which their permanent character was derived. And if from this same fountain our departed friend and father drew his Christian strength, as we have no doubt that he did,

then follow ye him. Let his youthful colleague follow him, as one who has been privileged in being brought into intimate relations with so Christian a man. Let the people follow him, who, ever since he was a boy, walked with God before their eyes. Cultivate that permanence of Christian principle which made his life from boyhood to eighty-five so complete a whole. With such permanence of Christian character your Christian institutions will be permanent, the gospel among you will be a steady power, and you may confidently look for the continuance of that spiritual prosperity which you have so long enjoyed.

# SERMON,

BY

## Rev. Levi L. Paine.

# SERMON.

HEB. xi: 4.—"And by it he being dead yet speaketh."

IT was by his faith and piety that Abel continued to speak to the Hebrews so many ages after his death. When a man dies, little long survives but that which was excellent and godly in his character. Most pathetically do the Scriptures set forth the transitoriness of everything pertaining to man in his earthly conditions and relationships. "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more." But we also read, that "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." There is something in piety which triumphs over the forgetfulness of the grave. When a good man dies, being dead he yet lives and speaks.

A voice which has been more familiar than any other in this place for half a century was last week hushed in death. We gather again in this sanctuary; but the form which has been wont to meet our reverent gaze is

not here. There is a vacant chair at my side. Yet Dr. Porter has not ceased to speak to us. I have often thought, as I have endeavored to fulfill the duties of my office in this pulpit, from Sabbath to Sabbath, that the silent listener near me was preaching far more effectually than I could preach; and now though removed from our sight, he speaks through the precious testament which he has left us, of a godly life and example. Let us, this Sabbath morning, in this place so long consecrated by his labors and presence, gratefully open this testament of his, and hear from him his last message.

But you must bear with me, if I speak of Dr. Porter, as I knew him, in an imperfect and broken language. For the first time in my ministry I feel a sense of loneliness. A relation, one of the most sacred and delightful into which it was ever my lot to be brought, has been sundered. He in whose heart I so rested, on whose wisdom I so relied, and whose simple presence so cheered and lightened my labors, is taken from me. But I must not linger, as I fondly would, over a personal grief. In this I but share in that which you all feel.

I cannot hope, in the sketch which I would draw of Dr. Porter's character, to present anything approaching to a perfect and exhaustive view of it. I have known him only in his old age. Of the spiritual struggles and experiences, of the labors, trials and Providential discipline out of which his character grew, and by which it was shaped, I have no personal knowledge. But such

knowledge is very helpful if not quite essential to a true conception and estimate of any human character. If we would feel the full glory and beauty of a sunrise, we must begin with the earliest twilight, and watch the slow flight of night and its shadows before the coming day. So if we would measure the whole scope and excellence of a human character, we must have seen it in all its processes of development, in all its wrestlings with sin and evil, in all its periods of darkness, trial and peril, in all its victories over self and the world. The brief margin of Dr. Porter's life which I was privileged to behold, was characterized by that serenity and repose which mark the soul's autumnal maturity, when struggle has subsided, storms are past, and home is near. But perhaps in this limitation of view to the few closing years, what is lost in comprehensiveness may be gained in clearness of vision, as we see a picture best when all other objects are covered. In the last years of life there is gathered, as into a focus, the resultant of all the spiritual forces which have been working on and moulding the character. We have there summed up the total amount of what the whole life has yielded. As I have looked at Dr. Porter, there was a symmetry, a roundness, a mellowness which spoke with authority of what his past life has been. Such a character was never built up in a day. It is a century plant. Its roots must have run far back into childhood and infancy. Its youth must have been sobered and sanctified by an earnest consecration of the whole life to God. Its manhood must

have been one constant and victorious march in the path of duty. In its progressive development it must have realized the beautiful description of the inspired Preacher: "The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

The first trait in Dr. Porter's character, of which I would speak, is that which, as I conceive, lay at the foundation of all his Christian excellencies,—*his faith.* Dr. Porter had remarkably strong and clear convictions of the reality of things not seen. He was thoroughly persuaded of them. His thoughts were continually dwelling on them. He walked daily with God. Prayer had become the native tongue of his soul. He looked forward to that heavenly life which the Scriptures promise and partially unfold, with a full assurance of hope. There was great simplicity in his faith. He implicitly trusted God; he believed the Divine Word; he rested everything on the faithfulness of Him who had promised. His faith was also deeply experimental. He was assured of the reality of divine things because he felt the power of them in his own heart. Yet he was, least of all, a mystic. His faith was a rational one. He believed that religion was a most reasonable thing. His own religion was not founded in feeling, nor was it left to the caprices of impulse; but it had the assent of his deliberate judgment, and was always controlled by it. Hence the even and calm flow of his religious experience. If he had no ecstacies, he had no ebb-tides of depression, doubt, despair. It was not the least remarkable quality of Dr. Porter's faith, that

it was so completely and transparently sincere. It may have seemed to some that he was greatly aided in his religious attainments by his sacred calling. If a minister is not supposed to be better by nature than other men, he is at least supposed to enjoy far greater facilities for growth in grace. And it is doubtless true that a minister is peculiarly protected from some sins and temptations by his Christian office. The fact, too, that religion is, in a sense, his business, gives him peculiar opportunities for exercising his Christian gifts, and developing his Christian graces. But no place in this world is beyond the reach of spiritual assailments and perils. That which may seem to be a minister's strength has too often proved the source of his weakness and fall. The sins most frequently and sharply rebuked by our Savior, were those of religious cant and hypocrisy—sins which had their strong hold in the hearts of the religious teachers of his time, and which are always especially dangerous to the piety of those who, because of their office, are led to feel that whatever they do should wear some semblance, at least, of religion. That Dr. Porter's character should have been so free from all religious affectation is a most weighty testimony to the genuineness and depth of his piety. In his whole Christian demeanor he was natural. Sincerity ran through the very marrow of his being. He was just what he seemed to be—"an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile." He could no more have worn a mask or acted a false part, than he could have told a lie. Hence the faithfulness and impartial-

ity of his Christian dealing with all men. As his convictions of right and duty were clear, so when the fit occasion offered, they were frankly and faithfully given. I look upon this quality of Christian sincerity which so eminently distinguished Dr. Porter, as one of the most truly attractive and beautiful traits in his character. It was one source of his moral power as a preacher, and as a man. He believed, and therefore spoke. His very sincerity made his preaching always impressive. It compelled attention, and yet had a winning grace. The truths of the gospel seemed clothed with a new importance and solemnity, as they were uttered by his guileless tongue.

A second trait in Dr. Porter's character of which I would speak, was *the singleness of his devotion to his Christian work.* As my own acquaintance with Dr. Porter grew more intimate, the impression which this trait in him made upon me, was proportionably increased. He was not an impulsive or bustling man. There was a calm method in all that he did. But his whole heart and mind was in his work as a Christian laborer. And he never came to feel that his work was done. In his eighty-fifth year, after having served his Master in the Gospel ministry for two generations, he considered himself just as truly called, according to his strength and opportunities, to engage in active labors for Christ, as he did, when in early youth he gave himself to God. In illustration of this, I wish I were able to tell you all that is treasured up in my heart and memory pertaining to the relation which has subsisted between us

during these last five years. You know how he received me at my coming; as a father receives a son. Before my acceptance of your call, in a letter to me, he said: "Should you come, I should immediately give all up into your hands." From the day of my ordination, he treated me as the sole pastor of this church. The first word of dictation to me never passed his lips. I have often heard it said, during these five years, that the relation of a colleague is a most delicate and trying one. Were I to speak from my own experience, I should say that no happier lot could befall a young pastor than to spend the first years of his ministry in this relation. But while he thus imposed the responsibilities of the pastoral office on me, he did not, under this new state of things, regard himself as relieved from all further care or interest in pastoral work, or from his responsibilities as a Christian man. The relation between us became a *living* relation. He gave me his whole confidence; he always told me all that was in his heart. He stood ready to counsel me, and to render such assistance in the pulpit as I should need. And it was through the growing intimacy of this relation that I discerned how completely devoted he was to the work of winning souls to Christ, and of promoting the welfare of Zion. He loved this church with the whole strength of his being, and prayed and labored for its increase till the day of his death. Several times, in seasons of spiritual declension among us, have I found him deeply lamenting our condition, and eagerly inquiring what could be done for the revival of God's work.

And whenever the Divine Spirit seemed to be hovering over us, and there was an increasing solemnity in our meetings, I could always gather it from the state of Dr. Porter's mind. His soul was most sensitive to every indication of God's special presence, and was always in readiness to welcome it. Until within a brief period, when he was kept at home by growing infirmities, he was a constant attendant upon all our religious meetings. Who of that little company in our Wednesday afternoon prayer meetings, will soon forget those brief earnest addresses with which he was wont to follow my own remarks! What member of our Sabbath School will not long remember the venerable form of that teacher who esteemed it a privilege to labor in the Lord's vineyard, wherever he might do good, while life lasted! And what teacher will not long be inspired by his example! Very touching too, it was to me, to witness the part he took in the special meetings of last winter. When the idea of those meetings was first presented to him, he entered into it with all his heart. The message of invitation he carried from house to house through quite a large section of our village. And how appropriately, how affectionately, how feelingly did he speak to us, whenever called to! Dr. Porter always responded to whatever he esteemed a call of duty. It was the habit of his life to do so. It was only last November that he told me he thought his public work was done, referring to his work as a preacher of the Gospel. He preached but once after that, in a sudden emergency which seemed to him providential. But he never spoke

of his private Christian work as done. I have never seen him more actively engaged and interested in such work than he was last spring, as member of the committee appointed by the church for parish visitation and tract distribution. His place on that committee is now to be filled. Rarely has a life so long, been so active to its close. Most beautifully significant of it was that coincidence by which it happened that when he last descended from this pulpit, he had just offered a closing prayer, and pronounced upon us the Divine blessing. And thus, still a worker for God, he was called away. Death

> "——— found him on the field,
> A veteran slumbering on his arms,
> Beneath his red-cross shield."

Any notice of Dr. Porter's character would be very incomplete, which did not take into view *his charity*. Christian love was the soul of his religion, and the ruling feature of his life. His mind was liberal; his heart was enlarged. He judged the conduct of others as favorably and tenderly as was possible. So habitual was this with him that I sometimes queried, whether, looking through the mirror of his own pure and sincere nature, he did not fail to take into account all the vicious elements of humanity. But it was not so. Dr. Porter knew the human heart. He thoroughly believed in its native depravity and deceitfulness. But his charitable disposition always inclined him to the more favorable view of character and conduct. I do

not remember ever to have heard him utter a harsh judgment. He spoke freely of the actions of men, but rarely of their motives; these he left in the hands of the great Searcher of hearts. Dr. Porter was naturally trustful and unsuspicious. He cherished no resentments. He forgave all injuries. As much as lay in him, he lived peaceably with all men. He avenged not himself, but overcame evil with good.

I cannot close this estimate of Dr. Porter without adverting to some features of his life, as he appeared among us during these late years. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." Dr. Porter's last days were happy days. The retrospect of his long life was pleasant to him. It contained no great wrongs, no sad mistakes, to cast their shadows over his old age. I never heard him give expression to any regrets. He had a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. He was always cheerful. Life to the last had a relish for him. He enjoyed the society of his family and friends; took great pleasure in reading; rejoiced in every opportunity of doing good. Dr. Porter scarcely knew what it is to be old. His mind continued active and vigorous. His feelings were fresh and exuberant. He lost none of his interest in social life, or in public affairs. Yet all the while his affections were fixed on things above. He looked forward to death as an event which was near at hand; and he was ready to depart and be with Christ. He talked about his decease with cheerfulness, and with a growing anticipation and eagerness.

As he drew near to the grave, his mind was kept in perfect peace, being stayed on God in the hopes of the Gospel. Those heavenly blessings which he had so many times held out to the faith of others, now shone down upon his own soul with a crescent brightness, like stars in the evening sky. And so he fell asleep.

But Dr. Porter's last days were not only happy, they were beautiful. Their very happiness and peacefulness helped to make them so. It was beautiful to see him walk our streets, with form erect and step elastic, as if endowed with immortal youth. It was beautiful to see him in the intercourse of his home, affectionate, simple, and playful as a child. Beautiful, to see him visit from house to house, entering with renewed interest, as he laid the heavier burdens of the pastorate aside, into domestic cares, and trials, and joys; speaking a word in season, and leaving everywhere his benediction of peace. Beautiful it was, to see him, each Sabbath day, sitting in his accustomed place in this house of God, so humble, so reverent, so quick to hear, his face shining sometimes "as it had been the face of an angel."

Dr. Porter, more than any other man I ever knew, realized my ideal of the Old Testament saint. He possessed to a remarkable degree the Old Testament virtues—the faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, the piety of Samuel, the patience of Job. And his life, in its close, filled out the picture, which the Old Testament is wont to draw, of the felicity of the righteous. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom. Length of days is in her right hand. Her ways are ways of pleas-

antness, and all her paths are peace." "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Yet after all, a true conception of Dr. Porter's piety requires us to supplement the Old Testament with the New. "Godliness hath promise not only of the life that now is, but of that which is to come." In Dr. Porter's faith was combined the faith of Abraham and the faith of Paul. He could say with the Apostle—"for we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."

Dr. Porter's whole character was one of singular beauty. It not only had great excellencies, it was also free from the faults and blemishes which mar the beauty of so many human characters. Such symmetry was there about him, that it was difficult sometimes to de-

tect the secret of that which made him appear so lovely. Yet his character was one of positive strength. It was built out of the solid granite of conviction, and principle, and faith in God. His house was founded upon a rock. During a long life the rains descended upon it, and the winds beat against it, but it fell not; *for it was founded upon a Rock.* It has been our blessed privilege, my hearers, to see that house in its old age; the rains over, the winds stilled, the clouds breaking away, the light of heaven shining on it. The earthly part of it was indeed dissolving; the outward man was perishing; but the inward man was being renewed day by day. Beautiful was such a house, though falling outwardly into decay; beautiful was the evening of such a life, so serene and starry. By that life, he being dead yet speaketh. He speaks to the old who are soon to follow him. He speaks to the young before whom life still opens. And the question which comes to us all, as a voice from his grave, is: *on what is thy house founded?*

# SERMON,

BY

## HORACE BUSHNELL, D. D.

# SERMON.

PSALM 71: 9.—"Cast me not off in the time of old age: forsake me not when my strength faileth."

STRENGTH must fail—that is the condition of age—and how often does it fail, morally as well as physically; as if the decayed and broken old man were really forsaken of God, just now when he is most wanting God's abiding presence and supporting help. It is so, many times, in cases where there was supposed to be, and apparently was, a fair show of Christian character. The picture is a very sad one, and one that moves our pity the more deeply that nothing is left any longer to move our respect.

Thus we too commonly see that the man who is becoming old and growing conscious of loss, takes on airs of smartness to rally his powers; but alas, they will not answer, or thinking foolishly that they do, others will see that they do not. By and by he is obliged to admit, in a dolorous way, that he wearies easily, and scolds his vigor, for the giving out in which it deserts him. He is secretly chafed by the discovery that he

cannot do anything in such a gale of impulse as he used to have upon him. Purpose flags, intensity slackens, food has a dull relish, and sleep is unrefreshing or even wearisome. His memory crumbles, his sight grows dim, his hearing thick, or probably enough all these tokens come upon him together. His bones are heavy and troubled by rheumatic twinges. His step, that began to be slowed, is now becoming tremulous; there are quavers too and cracks in his voice—alas! he is a broken, decrepid old man.

Now any or all these changes might come upon him only to make him a happy, much honored and even enviable man; but prepared for them by no right discipline or character, he is as far from that as possible. He is even broken morally more than he is in his body. All the perverse tempers that he used to hold in check, but that were never extirpated, are now loosed, having nothing left to hold them in check longer. As the will-force slackens, the habit-force takes undivided sway, so that in all bad points he appears to be worse, and not better than he was. He is more easily moved by jealousy—jealous of others who are getting before him in business, or above him in standing; if he is a pastor among his flock, jealous of his flock, when some other is praised, or grows popular; if he is rich, jealous not unlikely of his children. His infirmities make him peevish. If he was a little covetous, his dim eye twinkles at the mere chance of gain, and his charities are all shut in. He is irritable, unreasonable, a torment in this way to his friends, and quite as much to himself. If he did not pray, his tempers

now forbid the attempt when his judgment requires it. If he used to pray, he now prays without any sense of benefit, and as one forsaken of God. Miserable, truly helpless, hopeless old man! without serenity or peace, and watching for his death only as he watches for an enemy.

The picture is, alas! too often seen—seen too often, I must add, in the case of men reputedly Christian. And such was the picture I conceive that our Psalmist had in view when he prayed, "Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth." He wanted a good and ripe old age, a divinely sanctified habit, supported by the confidence of God's favor and friendship. He wanted all the peace good tempers bring; to be loving and lovely, and pure, and true; so that if his body should crumble his mind would not, or so that if his mind should crumble his heart should be rested in peace; so that if his eye should be dim, or his ear report no sound, he could still go forth speaking benedictions on his friends, and beaming testimonies unspoken, from the manifest sweetness and serenity of his closing days.

In this view, it becomes a very great question for us all, how we shall obtain the blessing of a good and right old age? On this point let me offer a few suggestions.

And one great law to be considered is, that it is not what we get, but what we are, that provides a happy, well-conditioned old age. As we cannot carry what

we get with us when we go hence, so it is about equally difficult to carry on down to old age, in a manner to get much from it, either money, or admiration, or a name, unless we carry a good, great soul with it; and upon that everything depends. The very eagerness of any getting process grows, at last, into a kind of bad possession, that even makes a torment of success. The power that was gotten, now that strength faileth, becomes a poor, lame caricature; the admiration begets jealousy, the money that cannot sufficiently bless, begets peevishness. Nothing, in short, makes a happy old age but to be, in ourselves, what makes well-being possible.

For a similar reason we must, as Christian men, depend more on our habits and tempers than we do on our opinions, or the self-control of our will. Right opinions will even make a man more miserable, if he has not lived them out thoroughly enough to get them converted into dispositions—lingering round him as shadows and ghosts of reality, that only mock his peace and cannot even support his prayers. So if he has had it for his religion to merely keep himself in a respectable show, by the self-controlling force of his will, he will be left, when that force slackens, with all his half-regulated tempers on hand, to run riot in him and trample his peace. What he wanted was to get heavenly tempers bedded in right habit,—able, in that manner, to reign well when his will ceases to reign. The peace of a good old man belongs to what is inmost in

his habit—the truth of his feeling, the luminous glory of his faith, the loving sweetness of his dispositions.

The same is true again of what is called holy principle; it must be principle ingrained by the sway it has maintained over the life. Quite old men do sometimes take up new principles, but the difficulty is that the new principles cannot sufficiently take up them. Holy principles want to be so fastened and domiciliated in the soul that we no longer even assent to them, but have them reigning by their own determinations, even as good subjects bow to the laws of the state without so much as remembering that they ever chose to obey. Having reached this point by the practice of a righteous life, the old man stands a pillar, because right principle has made him a pillar. In this principle, long held, his nature itself has become harmonic and steady, and when he breaks there is a kind of sovereign order in him that cannot break. When his memory gives way, as it often does, he does not have to remember, and keep right by continual self-recollection; for there is a right keeping in him that goes on of itself. There is dignity, order, and sweetness in him, all the more evident, that it stays by even in his weakness, flowing as serenely as fair weather, even in decrepitude itself.

Again, the kind of piety wanted is rather a close habit of friendship with God, than a compost of frames and emotional excitements. The flame element in souls commonly runs low in old age, and an old man trying to be raised in frames and ecstasies, or seeming to think that he is, makes a feeble, half-absurd figure.

What we now expect of him is a calm sobriety, not the tempests of emotional excitation. But if the old man has grown old in God's friendship, learned to have God nigh, and live in the sense of his society, if he has been true and faithful, and has daily had the sunrise of his mind in the testimony that he pleases God, a kind of holy custom settles on his feeling, and keeps the embers of his life in a glow, when the flames of emotion have subsided. As he sits a patriarch in his chair, so his mind sits serenely in the chair of his customary piety. And he worships serenely, leaning on the top of his staff, as one whose piety, grown old in habit, is fixedly rested on God. He thinks no more of his frames, watches them no more. Holy custom is the frame that keeps him and he wants no other.

Again, it is partly an inference from all that has been said, and also a truth standing in its own evidence, that the best old age is possible only when the Christian life begins early. Here, in fact, is one of the principal delusions of men, that when they are doing so many things to provide for the comfort and peace of old age, they are yet so commonly postponing the calls of religion to the time of middle life, or even to the arrival of age, when their work of enterprise will be ended. A late-born piety they think will be sufficient. They expect to waste the fine possibilities of youth, and yet suffer no loss. There could not be a sadder mistake. Doubtless a very old man may be converted, but he also may not. And if he is, the new nature will not easily become a second nature in him. He will be an old man

with only a young piety—strengthened by no experience, blurred and baffled in everything by his old blind habits, struggling vainly to keep his new beginnings good, groping and stumbling in them, because he has no acquaintance with God to steady his practice. His feeling is bronzed by his old religious neglect, his motives are married to a persistently selfish habit, and his very prayers, for want of any skill in prayer, become a kind of peevishness. Only the piety that begins in childhood, and ripens with manhood, and flows along onward in the current of years, can duly saturate and shape the soul's habit. This early kind of piety becomes at last the man himself, so to speak—a kind of ingrown property, that flavors his life-principle itself. The happy, right old man, therefore—this let every youth remember—is commonly the right young man grown old in God—he and no other. "The child is father of the man," in a much deeper and more Christian sense than the poet even seems to have imagined.

Once more, it makes a very great difference as regards the kind of old age at which we arrive, by what kind of engagement we make our approach to it. If we become old simply by the going on of the sun, and not by any going on of life in works of industry and duty, our state of age will not be either Christian, or good, save in the sense that we are permitted a possible hope of salvation at the end of it. The powers settle gracefully into old age, only when we come to it in the harness of good endeavor. What we call wearing out in good, is only the way to wear in good; so that when

the forces of action are spent, the soul is packed brim-full of good, and in that good finds the equilibrium of its rest. A really fine old age is a hall into which the powers have come to hang up their armor, and look on it with a brave strong heart, because there has been something bravely and well done. The soul is strong in righteousness because it has been suffering and fighting for righteousness sake. But where the transition to age is made through self-indulgence, indolence, or a mere idle looking on, the state of age will be the rust of the man, nothing more. The residuum of a chaffy life is only chaff. Even if the man be a Christian, he will yet be a chaffy Christian, unsolid, unregulated, weak and dry. Having so long been doing nothing which Christ lays it upon him to do, he will finish his course in becoming a kind of Christian nothing to himself—unilluminated, without zest, having nothing to remember, and waiting for death more as an enemy than as a friend. He can not pray, "forsake me not when my strength faileth," for he was not using his strength for God when he had it. The really right old man is one who has been strenuously right before, one who can say with David, in this same chapter, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." "Hitherto," he says, down to this time, and he begins to fear, as the sense of age comes on, that he may give out before his great life-purpose is accomplished; therefore he prays again, "Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto this genera-

tion, and thy power to every one that is to come." What shall come, but a right and strong old age, passing into it by a transition so manfully strenuous? The transition will not commonly be made in a day, or even in a single year, but the high engagements will be still in hand, and the life will be lapsing gradually into the exhausted or decrepid state, still keyed as it has been before, and resting grandly in that key.

These thoughts I have sketched, to show something of the manner in which, and only in which, a right and happy old age is prepared. Probably there is not one of you, not even the youngest, who does not sometimes glance along down his future, asking what kind of figure he will make when the time of old age is come. You all desire long life, and just as much desire a long life crowned with peace. Be not insensible, then, to the immense significance of the suggestions I have now made.

And that you may be the more feelingly impressed with their truth, and the value of their truth, let me go on to show you their embodiment in a shape more convincing than words; namely, in the worthy and great character of your late venerable father and pastor. I do not propose, at this time, an obituary sketch of his life, in the facts and dates that marked its progress; this I presume has been sufficiently done already, by your young surviving pastor, in the commemorative discourse he has already given. He also himself, very modestly and beautifully recited the facts of his life and ministry, in his

Half-Century sermon. What I wish more especially to do on the present occasion is to sketch, if I can, his character; and above all, its principal distinction, as exhibited and crowned by his truly great old age—a character which is not easily written, and I fear never can be, so as worthily to present the picture.

Two weeks ago, Dr. Porter, your pastor, closed his venerable life, at the very advanced age of nearly eighty-five years. Here he was born and brought up, and here he served in the ministry of God for sixty years, supported, and only more and more nearly replaced by a much beloved colleague, in the latter years of his life. He looked out from his window and his walks on the glorious rich landscape of the Farmington valley, and watched its changing moods and phases from childhood onward to his dying day, freshened always in his feeling by the picture, and becoming a good type of it, in the breadth and holy quiet of his own bosom. He was known so well by his flock that only a half-dozen knew when he began to be known. Indeed, if he ever threw a shade of doubt upon any word of Scripture, it was done by showing that a prophet can possibly have honor in his own country. And yet it was not honor, exactly, that you learned to pay him, but something deeper and closer to necessity. We do not so much honor our heads as accept them, and let them go through our body; giving dear welcome to what they think, contrive, impel in our motions —all the benefits they propose, all the configurations

of body, and feeling, and life in which their sway is exerted. If we call it honor that we pay them, we only speak in a figure; the real truth of which is that they go through us and pervade us in the most occult and inmost secretions of our bodily and mental life. So he came into the eyes of your childhood as a child, and began to do you good thus early; for an excellent Christian man, who had been his playmate here in childhood, left it as one of his acknowledgments that he owed his beginnings in the Christian life to the conversations of Noah Porter, the child, when he was but nine years old. So he grew up with you as you grew, went through you week by week and year by year in his teachings, and you took him pervasively; till he came to be so deeply ingrown that Farmington was Dr. Porter and Dr. Porter Farmington, and he could not be gotten out of your nature now, save by a decomposition of your substance. What immense worth and wisdom it required in him to win such a place among his townsmen, it is not difficult to perceive. How often would a mere slackness in duty, a very little bad passion, a few grains of nonsense or conceit, have raised the familiars of his childhood against him! But he grew steadily out upon you, and so grew steadily into you, neither you nor he scarce knowing how; childhood passing into youth, youth into manhood, and manhood into old age; so that when his working day was ended, he stood a ripe old man, complete in character—by that working still, so pervasively that you scarcely felt the outward cessation of his work.

Years before his death disabilities began to come upon him, such as would have quite unstrung most men —partial deafness, partial blindness, a touch of paralysis; but it was beautiful to see how his character stood by, like the bones in his body, and supported everything in a firm equilibrium. More by habit than by will, he held on, with what force was left him, upon his old engagements and duties, giving out the heat that was left in his embers, calling the youth, striving with his people in their prayers, talking or expounding, when he could not read a manuscript, helping, as he could, his young colleague, and drawing the people affectionately toward him; just as truly himself, in all inmost character, as if no infirmities had come.

Some might think that he was steadied by his naturally firm, clear intellect, but it would be quite as true to say that his intellect was steadied by the moral equilibrium of his habit. There was, it was true, no gustiness or tempest-force in his natural character that could spring the equilibrium of his mind; but how many such there are who get no balance and hold nothing steadily, just because they have no springs of impulse, and take to nothing with sufficient appetite to be fastened by it! He was not a brilliant man, as we commonly speak; there was nothing sensational in his demonstrations; but there was a vast amount of food in him, and a deeply-toned fervor of enthusiasm that provoked a solid appetite in his hearers. His sermons represented his industry and his profound love of truth. He may have written a poor sermon, but I never heard one from

him. Indeed, I have many times felt that, if a true average could be cast, it would not be easy to fix on any other preacher of his time whose average stood higher. If he did not soar, there was nevertheless a capacity visible to get on with something, to add, to work out, to incite, bring forward and maintain a living motion. His argument was thoroughgoing, solid, and richly imbued with experience. He launched his sermons as they launch ships—heavy-timbered, close-built, having the seams well calked; ready thus for the water, and pitching deliberately in as by gravity, but never going under.

His piety worked very much like his mind; moving in weight, and having, as it were, a law of indivertible progress in itself. It was experimental, but not fantastic or moody. It was clear of all cant, and bore no look of sanctimony. He loved ancient things, and especially ancient goodness, which had a great deal more power over him than ancient thinking. All men he knew could mistake, but goodness could not be less than good; and he loved to be drawn very closely to it and to God, by the study of its best examples. He wanted to know how they came, and if there was a plain mixture of error from the head, he wanted to find, if possible, what the truth was out of which they got their spring. God was the soul to him of all truth, and truth was practical, in that it had a soul and could also beget a soul. He sought to make God great, as being great in love, and the life-giving power of love, not as being at the head of some great theologic sys-

tem of abstractions. He did not work speculation-wise, though he had abundant reasons always to support him in his subjects. He began as a Calvinist, and he died, I suppose, thinking himself a Calvinist; as in some duly qualified sense he certainly was. But he maps a large transition in his noble Half-Century sermon, that shows how willing he was to make advances, if they could only be made in allegiance to truth. I also remember to have heard him say, not many months before his death, that he was coming somehow to look on a good many things differently from what he once did. He was ready always to see things differently, and no word of man, however sanctified by custom, held him for one minute, after he saw it not to be true. Whatever, therefore, he may have said or thought of himself as related to his beginnings under Calvin, I think it even the best and truest tribute for him, to say that he died, and was more and more concerned to die, a Christian. He clung to the gospel as God's very truth, and could not sufficiently magnify the Christ of his faith; Christ crucified, offered up for sin, the justifying grace of God in that manner for lost man. His very mind was flavored by the cross of his Lord, and the love begotten by it both to God and man. In this love he was set on from his earliest years, wanting always to know more of it, even the most possible.

Now, in every one of the traits I have sketched he was only writing, so to speak, the introduction to his very peculiar and really sublime old age. The grand distinction of it was, and I know not any example to

match it, that he kept his windows open to the last, willing to know anything possible to be known, afraid of nothing that could bring just evidence. He kept up with the times. To help the blur of his sight, he used a large magnifying lens, holding it by the handle; and by help of this, he had slowly pushed his way, sentence by sentence, through the lately published volume, Ecce Homo, even before it was issued from the American press. Not satisfied, he resumed his task and did the same again. And then, to make sure of his judgment, and his largely qualified approval, he did the same a third time. There was no single grain of radicalism in his personal temperament. He was naturally conservative and cautious. He only did not want his ship anchored, but to keep his sail still up, steering carefully on by the Bible charts and the needle of a polarized experience. Loving liberty, he loathed liberalism; forbidden thus to be either a bigot or a loose adventurer—avoiding in this manner the two opposite infirmities of age; that of an old man who has played fast and loose with truth so long that he goes to pieces in piteous weakness, having no faith left to hold him together; and that of the old man whose soul has become ossified by age, whose opinions must be right, deviation from whose way must be sin—able to endure no variant form of thought which meets the bigot form of his most certainly essential truth. This latter infirmity of age he felt to be, in his case, the more especial danger, and he often prayed to be kept from it. He even spoke of having taken it as a fixed reso-

lution, never to allow any such incrustation upon his soul's liberty. The result was that, in his latest days, he never had his equanimity disturbed because the world moved, or because he could not hold it still. Indeed, he wanted it to move, and presented the very uncommon spectacle of an old man willing to keep up with it even to his grave's edge.

He asserted the same liberty for others, and even had a rather strenuous battle for it when he was already seventy years of age; in which his quality is nobly shown, and also his ability to weather a storm for liberty, as other old men do for their formulas. In the Ministerial Association, where, by his acknowledged merit, he long held the rank of fatherhood and chief leadership, it was my lot to be arraigned for heresy; this, too, if I correctly remember, on motion made by Dr. Porter himself, esteeming it a duty probably which was owed to the general fraternity and peace of the churches. By careful and fair inquiry he became satisfied that I was probably right in some things; in some things he was not as well satisfied; in some things I suppose that he even blamed an appearance of departure. But he could not see that I was fatally off the foundations, or that deposing me from the ministry would contribute anything to the real honor and safety of religion. He voted therefore Nay, and there was a general consent in the vote. Whereupon protesting clamors broke out on every side. He was set upon, goaded, implored, by brethren who were his compeers in age, by men of high position, by younger men assuming to be

fathers before their time, all demanding a reconsideration, and scarcely anybody interposing a word to soothe the panic, or to clear away the smoke of it. But the reconsideration did not come, simply because honest conviction had majesty enough to be conviction still. He knew what belonged to a man acting on conviction, and could not be without understanding because he was seventy years old. And who is there now, it might be fairly asked, that does not justify both his judgment and his firmness in it? Was it laxity that withstood so fierce a clamor? There is nothing heroic in laxity. Was it obstinacy? There was not a particle of obstinacy in his nature. No, it was the firmness of a soul religiously wedded to truth, and daring with brave confidence to assert some rational degree of liberty for truth's sake. I have seen other old men; I have read of many; but a better, finer example of true Christian fatherhood in the faith is, I think, not often seen.

Now, it is the more remarkable that Dr. Porter kept such open outlook on the world, and such free sympathy with its forward movements, that he lived his whole life long in this very quiet agricultural town, remote from all the exciting and stimulating causes of his time; also, that he kept himself very much at home, performing his still rounds of duty with unceasing fidelity and exactness. He worked as the sun does, and one year was the duplicate of another. He was punctual, too, as the sun. He not only preached, but

he watched his sermons and his people under them, contriving how, if possible, to keep his work in motion. He fanned every fire that began to burn, and kindled every fire he could. He loved every conversion as a miser does his money; and when conversions did not come, he was none the less strenuous to edify such as had come. He watched the schools not less carefully, and kept them in his eye, as visitor and examiner of teachers, from first to last. All his habits ran to faithfulness, and faithfulness in turn moulded all his work into a character. He was faithful to his own household, having it for his reward to see all his children walking early in the way of his Christian example, and adding, in their places afterward, honor and respect to religion. All the children of all the households were his, to all the youth he was father. When they did well, he rejoiced; when they fell, he mourned, as a true father will. But the metropolis of his faithfulness was a small city of God which you did not often see, namely his study. There grew apace his unflinching, ceaseless way of industry. In that chamber of silence he went on year by year, sending up how many prayers for his flock, and by how many more plowing open the word to get new food both for himself and you. And how beautifully fitting was the sign he gave at the close, when he left his Greek Testament open upon his table, where he had been patiently deciphering the words, and taking his last dear lesson!

Now, it might naturally be supposed that, in such a kind of life, he must be legal and mechanical, and bear

a look of dryness. Very far from that; he had a genial, warm, and friendly nature, and knew how to connect with so great steadiness of habit a rare cordiality and gentleness. If he had a look of dryness to some, it was the dryness of benignity, which includes, in fact, a good many kinds of moisture. Thus, without any spark of wit, he had a certain play of humor, so quiet and covert that many would not see it; saying playfully, for example, when he came out the morning after his touch of paralysis, "Well, I feel now like an old man, but I may be young again [that is, in the other world] before noon." Young people were greatly drawn to him, because he was so evidently drawn to them; for he did not bring down his old age upon them in airs of authority, but sought opportunity in them rather for a certain youthful paternity of feeling that softened the oppressive rigors of respect. He had also a certain inherent modesty that seemed to rather grow with age, than to be overgrown, and which kept back all such appearances of rigor. Those who knew him best, even his own family, could say that they never heard him speak of any thing he had written or done, in a self-pleasing way, because it was his. He was withal an eminently hospitable man. Having but a moderate salary, and obliged to draw upon his few acres of patrimony for the education of his family, he must yet have friends, and give them a free welcome at his table; and such a table it was, thanks in part to another, that angels coming unawares would not think they had missed

their place. His people grew into the same hospitable habit. I should make out a curious inventory if I could recount what public meetings, anniversaries, and variously notified gatherings have been held in Farmington, by his and their consent, during the last fifty years. We all think it a high honor and felicity of this Christian pastor and his flock, that the great American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was here organized, in his private parlor. But if we consider what is meant by a Christian hospitality to the outcast and the poor, and hear Christ say, "Ye did it unto me," we shall think it a much greater and nobler felicity, that here is the place, in all this broad land, where the poor Amistad captives must be gathered—finding here true Christian friends to care for and teach them, and shelter them from the hunters waiting to sieze them and drag them back into slavery. So began just here the Mendi Mission, which, though it has encountered more adversity than was looked for, we can not but hope will some time conquer the deserved success, and that these Mendi people will be able, at some future day, to write Farmington at the head of their new civilization. However that may be, it will be seen, by all these tokens, that legality and dryness could not reign, where the Great-Heart principle was so beautifully, honorably shown.

It will require no specifications to show that such a life was successful. It was also a happy life; more and more happy in appearance, even to the end. All that he wanted for the comfort of his old age he had—books,

and children tenderly mindful of him, and the wife of his youth, who had made his house a joy to him for two whole generations, and strengthened him in every best work and hardest trial. His people held him in the dearest love and reverence. Enemies he had none; it was difficult to be his enemy. He was happy in maintaining the dearest, tenderest relationship, as of father and son, with his colleague—being one of the few men that can have a colleague. Though his body was breaking, his mind appeared to be as firm and fresh as ever. The old house began to be dilapidated, but the occupant was even young in it still. There he rested in a fair serenity, and his paternal look beamed upon his friends and his people even more paternally to the last. All the conditions of a happy old age that I have named had been fulfilled in his life, and the result fulfilled the conditions. God was his friend, and it was a well-tried, confidently-felt friendship. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

Few men ever rose to such eminence in a way so quiet, and withal so little pretentious. He was no declaimer, no agitator, no platform man, no forward man as we commonly speak; but he began to be thought of long ago as one of the fixed stars in our sky—shining always just there, making no parallax, yet all the better to navigate by. He was sought as a counselor by all his brethren, far and near. He took on no airs of authority, and yet he was bishop among the churches.

He at last began to be missed at our ordinations and other councils, and seeing the patriarchal chair stand vacant, we thought of him with many sad regrets. If he had grown weak, or annoying, or oppressive, as old men often do, we could easily have spared him; but we had so great comfort in his fatherhood, that we loved his counsel still, and looked on his face as a token of God's benediction.

Farewell, venerable man! Be thy truly great character a mark for us, and may thy noble fatherhood drop its mantle upon us.

It might be expected that I should speak more directly to the church and people he has left and also to his family. But what can I say, in words, when such a life is speaking? I have tried to show you all how it is, pastor and people, that you may win a happy and wise old age. But you have been seeing this with your eyes for long years back, and what can I do now, better than to say—thank God for such a leader, and follow him. If the dead are blessed that die in the Lord, have you not seen how certainly blessed are the living that live in the Lord?

We are not surprised, but are none the less pleased, to hear that our venerable father had been dwelling much, in the months past, on the heavenly state before him. He knows it now, and the greetings of all the great good minds in that high company have put him already at home. And shall we not have it for a thought most welcome, that when so many children

pass in there, to be cherished for the beauty of their innocence, an old man now and then comes up thither, out of his sins and his weather-beaten life, in a habit so grandly true and right, as to move their glad respect?

# LAST DAYS.

Until within three or four months before Dr. Porter's death, his physical vigor and health had failed little, his power of endurance was not greatly lessened, and his step was quick and elastic, so that notwithstanding the failure of his sight and hearing, it was not easy for him to believe that he had come to so advanced age, and he sometimes playfully spoke of the time as yet to come when he should be an old man. His sight was so dim that reading was laborious, yet he highly enjoyed it, and perhaps sometimes overtasked himself in reading. He had wholly resigned the expectation of again preaching in the pulpit, but in May last, Mr. Paine being called away to a funeral on Sunday afternoon, Dr. Porter, that the regular service might not be omitted, preached without notes, a short extempore discourse, taking for his subject the penitent thief on the cross. The next day he officiated at a funeral, and on both these occasions, his friends enjoyed the apparently easy outflow of his thoughts, revealing his intimate communion with God. He, however, remarked that it had not been easy for him to sustain the course

of his thoughts, and a day or two later, after an hour or two of reading, at evening, his right side became somewhat paralyzed, and the next morning he could move but very feebly; his sight was dimmer than before, and his utterance was imperfect. He rather expected, very soon, another and a fatal attack, and said half playfully, "I have become now an old man, but I may be a young man before noon." He did not look forward to a recovery of his powers, but cheerfully and quietly resigned himself to the loss of them. But the paralysis proved less serious in its effects than he had expected, and after a few weeks, although he was more easily wearied than before, and did not regain his old quick step, his friends scarcely remarked a change, and a week or two before his death he spoke with thankfulness of his very comfortable health, and said that he might almost believe the paralysis to have been a fancy. The summer passed for him very serenely, and in his prayers he several times gave thanks "for peaceful days and quiet nights." He passed Friday evening, the 14th of September, cheerfully with his family, but early the next morning he was attacked with illness. It was a bilious attack, seeming not severe, and although from the first he was uncommonly drowsy, yet he and his family expected that he would throw off the disease, as before in similar cases. But the disease, without making for several days much progress, continued unabated. He suffered little, his strength was not exhausted, but his mind, although not wandering, was inactive, and he slept much and quietly. Towards the

end of the week, the fact that he was not throwing off his disease awakened fear as to its result. There was no great change until Sunday evening, when he sank into a sleep from which he was not roused. The sleep became more and more placid, and for several hours was as peaceful as the sleep of an infant, until between three and four o'clock in the morning of the 24th, his breath ceased, and his spirit was at home with God.

The funeral services were fixed for two P. M., on Wednesday the 26th. Many of Dr. Porter's friends, the neighboring ministers, who would gladly have been at his funeral, were absent from home at the annual meeting of the American Board at Pittsfield, Mass., and a rain, which through the day became more and more violent, hindered many others, and some of his own people, from coming to share in the last earthly acts of love for him. His own people, deacons and others, were his bearers. President Woolsey, of Yale College, and Mr. Paine, Dr. Porter's young colleague, conducted the services, the former offering the funeral prayer and making the address. The hymns beginning, "Servant of God, well done," and "Unveil thy bosom, faithful tomb," were sung. Before the close of the services at the church, the rain had become so violent that burial seemed almost impossible, and it was proposed to defer the burial until the next morning, and to leave the remains for the night in the church. All at once assented with pleasure to this proposal, and during the following night, the body, looking as if in natural sleep, lay in the aisle in front of the sacrament table of the

old church which he had regarded and loved as his second home. The next morning was beautiful and mild, and at nine o'clock Dr. Porter's friends and neighbors gathered at the church, to bear his remains to their last earthly home. At the grave, Mr. Paine spoke the last words of farewell. He held the book in which Dr. Porter had recorded the long list of deaths of the generations whom he had buried in the grave-yard where he himself was now gathered to them, and in the older neighboring ground. Before the family of Dr. Porter left his grave, Mr. Samuel Porter, the eldest son, in a few words, in behalf of the family of him who had just been laid in the grave, expressed heartfelt thanks to all who by taking part in the funeral, had showed their love and sympathy, and added that the family all desired, around the grave, to express their grateful recognition of the love and kindness bestowed by the people on their friend and father, during the long years now past, especially for the manifest love and respect which had so much soothed and made cheerful and happy his declining years. He hoped that God would grant to all grace so to live thereafter that the end might be peaceful, and that all might share with him, now in his grave, a blessed immortality.

The pulpit in which Dr. Porter had so long preached, and the chair in which he had, in later times, sat, a meek and earnest listener, remained for thirty days draped in black.

The Sunday following Dr. Porter's death, Mr. Paine delivered the memorial discourse now printed. Dr.

Bushnell had been invited to take part in the funeral services, but had been prevented by the severe storm from being present. At the request of Mr. Paine and of others of Dr. Porter's friends, he prepared and preached in Dr. Porter's pulpit, on the third Sunday after his death, the discourse herewith published.

# RESOLUTIONS.

At the Annual Meeting of the First Ecclesiastical Society of Farmington, held on the 3d day of December, A. D. 1866, the following Preamble and Resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, God in his providence, has, during the past year, removed by death the Rev. Noah Porter, D. D., for sixty years the Pastor of this Church and Society, therefore

*Resolved*, That we bow with profound grief, and with submission, to this afflictive dispensation.

*Resolved*, That this Society desire to express their high appreciation of the character and services of Dr. Porter, during his long and faithful service, as their spiritual shepherd and guide. We bear our grateful testimony to the purity and blamelessness of his life, to his entire devotion to the duties of his office, as a preacher, pastor and friend, to his usefulness as a citizen, and in all his relations to society.

*Resolved*, That we tender to his family an expression of our heartfelt sympathy with them in their affliction,

and our earnest desire that they may personally be sustained by the precious truths which their honored and beloved husband and father has so often and tenderly administered to the afflicted of his flock.

*Resolved,* That a copy of these Resolutions be signed by the Moderator and Clerk of this meeting, and be presented to the family of Dr. Porter.

Attest,

SAMUEL S. COWLES, *Clerk.*

## VOTE OF THE CHURCH.

At the Annual Meeting of the First Congregational Church of Farmington, held January 2d, 1867, it was unanimously voted to enter the following minute upon the Records of the Church, and that the Clerk be requested to communicate a copy of the same to the family of our late Senior Pastor, Dr. Porter:

The past year has been marked in the history of this Church by the removal from among us by death of our late greatly beloved and revered Senior Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Porter. For nearly sixty years has he been spared to go before this flock as their spiritual shepherd and guide. During all this period has he shown himself to be a single-hearted Christian; pure, gentle, forgetful of self, circumspect in life and conversation, and in all his relations and conduct commending the religion he professed to those around him.

We would gratefully record our testimony of his worth to this community as a citizen. By his public spirit; by his deep interest in, and efforts to promote

the prosperity of our public schools; by his steadfast adherence to, and advocacy of, what ever has tended to promote the public morals and highest temporal prosperity of the town; by his judicious counsels and liberal contributions, has he been to us alike a model and a public benefactor.

But chiefly do we desire here to express our profound appreciation of his eminent excellence and faithfulness as a Christian minister. Into the pulpit has he habitually brought discourses carefully prepared, rich in thought, elevated in style and expression, and above all designed and adapted to meet the spiritual wants of his hearers, and imbued throughout by the spirit and doctrines of the gospel. As a pastor, has he sought out alike the rich and the poor, guiding the erring and ignorant, comforting the afflicted, standing by the bedside of the sick and dying, and imparting to all the consolations needed by them. Even when compelled by the burdens and infirmities of age to cease from more active services, has he blessed us by his counsels of wisdom and love in our homes, and in the prayer meeting, and when his strength has allowed, by his presence and benedictions in the house of God.

Long will the fruits of his labors be gathered by us. Cherished in the deepest affections of our hearts shall be his memory and instructions. To God shall our prayers ascend for the venerable and beloved partner of his life, so long as God shall permit her to remain

among us, and also for his children. And to them would we express our sympathy, and our assurances of continued respect and regard.

Attest,

T. K. FESSENDEN, *Clerk.*

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